

The Road to Omaha

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THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER

March 11-12, 2005

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NCAA Wrestling special issue

The road soon ends

J. PARKER ADAIR
UNO Gateway

This year's NCAA Division II wrestling championship could be one of the tightest races in history.

It will be tough to match last year's excitement as it is not often that a championship

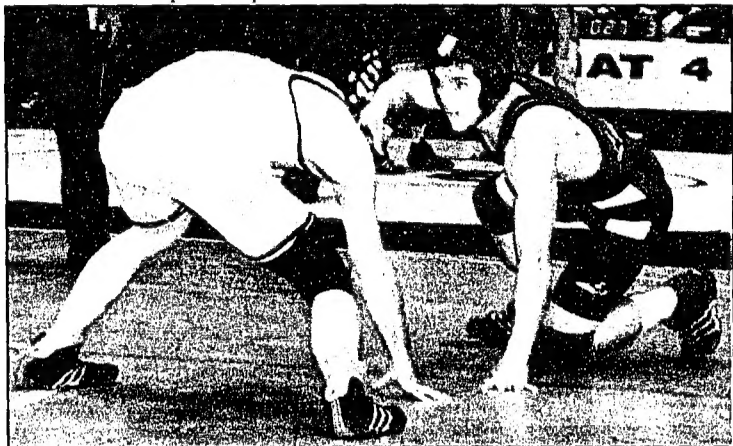
come down to the final match of a tournament. Still, there are plenty of story lines to follow this weekend as the tournament title for the team race is open between several schools.

Augustana is currently ranked first, but Nebraska-Omaha has been in that position all

year. When the Vikings knocked off UNO in the final dual of the season, they took the top ranking. After winning the North Region, Augustana hopes once again to crash UNO's home party and take a win for the second time in three weeks.

The Mavericks were in this position last year and will not die.

Throw in strong-finishing Pitt-Johnstown and Ashland along with traditional power Nebraska-Kearney, and this could get interesting.



Nebraska-Kearney

Nebraska-Kearney's Bryce Abbey could score some big team points. They will be needed if the Lopers hope to make a run at the NCAA title.

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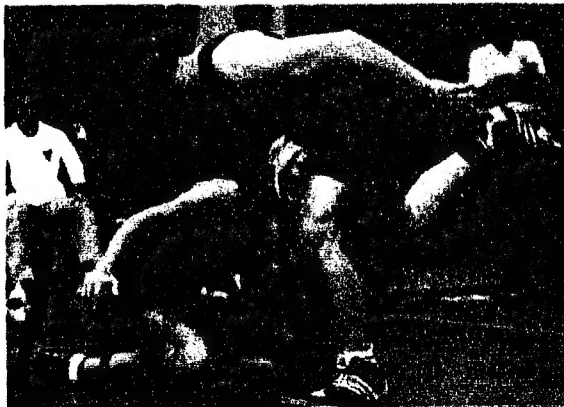
Who are the favorites?

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J. Parker Adair

Nebraska-Omaha's Shane Unger could help UNO claim it's second straight NCAA title at home.



J. Parker Adair

J.D. Naigh (attacking) is the nation's top 165-pound wrestler. He placed third for UNO last year as a freshman.

Last year's improbable finish left UNO the champion

J. PARKER ADAIR

The Gateway
March 23, 2004

It wasn't supposed to happen until next year. North Dakota State University was too good. They hadn't lost a dual meet all year. They won the national duals. They beat UNO in a dual. They won the North Central Conference. They won the North Region by qualifying all 10 wrestlers.

UNO had no senior starters and only three junior starters. Maverick 197-pounder Ben Strandberg failed the medical check and was not allowed to compete.

Next year, NDSU would move up to NCAA Division I and UNO would host the NCAA Division II tournament. Everything was in place for NDSU to win this year, and UNO to take a top-three finish this year and win it next year.

Everyone expected the Bison to walk away from D-II with the title from the tournament March 12-13 in Mankato, Minn. Everyone except a group of guys with more character than Robin Williams. UNO stole the title from the Bison in the tournament's last match when Heavyweight Les Sigman won his second NCAA title. Five other Maverick All-Americans joined him.

Dustin Tovar (125 pounds) earned a first-round win setting up a match with Nebraska-Kearney rival Bryce Abbey. Tovar came from behind with a head throw at the end of the first period and never let go of the lead.

When asked about going through two All-Americans to become one himself, Tovar said, "I wouldn't have it any other way."

He went on to win his next match 11-5 to make it to the finals.

Mitch Waite avenged a 133-pound dual loss by beating UNK's Adam Keiswetter 5-3 in the first round. He lost his next match, but recorded a pin at the whistle to add some extra team points and make him an All-American. He lost his next match, putting him in the seventh place match.

Eli Dominguez (141) knocked off a top seed in overtime, before dropping

a second-round match. He won another overtime match to put him in the third-place match.

At 149, freshman Patrick Allibone kept Maverick fans on the edge of their seats. After a first-round pin, Allibone won a tiebreaker to become an All-American.

"I'm enjoying it, just having fun," Allibone said. "Now we're just jockeying for how high you're going to be on the podium."

In the semifinals, Allibone, again was victorious in a tiebreaker.

Junior Chas DeVetter dropped two of his three matches, leaving him one win shy of becoming an All-American. His sudden victory win gave the Mavs a needed team point.

"Chas just had a tough draw," Head Coach Mike Denney said. "He just didn't get his head into it."

J. D. Naig (165) won his opener 5-0 before losing to two-time defending national champion, Shawn Silvis of Central Oklahoma. Naig wrestled

back to the third-place match by becoming a finalist at 125 with a major decision and two pins. That meant big team points for UNO.

Sigman came up big with a technical fall in the first match, a pin in the quarterfinals and a 15-0 technical to send him into the finals.

NDSU started losing semifinal matches, and bounced back and forth with UNO for the lead. Waite won his seventh place match and Dominguez and Naig both took third.

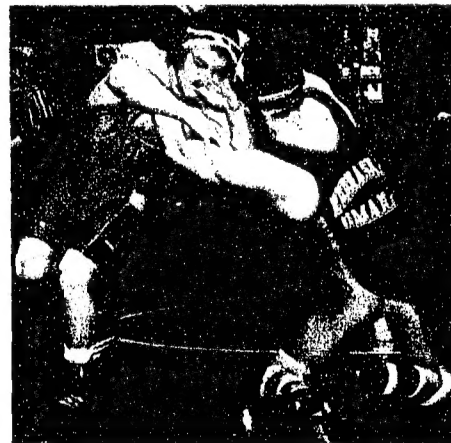
Naig's win over NDSU's Mike Fiedler was the first in their four meetings on the year.

"We needed every point, every win," Naig said. "Looking back, if I didn't get a pin or Pat didn't get a pin, or Chas didn't win, we don't win. Every one was big."

Heading into the finals, UNO was down 95-91 1/2. With each title worth four team points, UNO had to pick up one more win than NDSU-considering no bonus points were won by the Bison-to win by half a point.

Tovar lost to Jared Haberman of Western State in the finals. Then Allibone dropped to Western State's Adrian Jiron. The Mavs needed NDSU to lose at 184 and 197 to give Sigman a shot at the title. Somehow, they both lost and Sigman came to the floor.

Sigman basked in the pressure and quickly got in on a single leg takedown. Fort Hays State's Andrew Ubben put himself in a dangerous situation by not going to the ground. When Sigman took him down, fans could hear the pop of Ubben's leg. His



J. Parker Adair

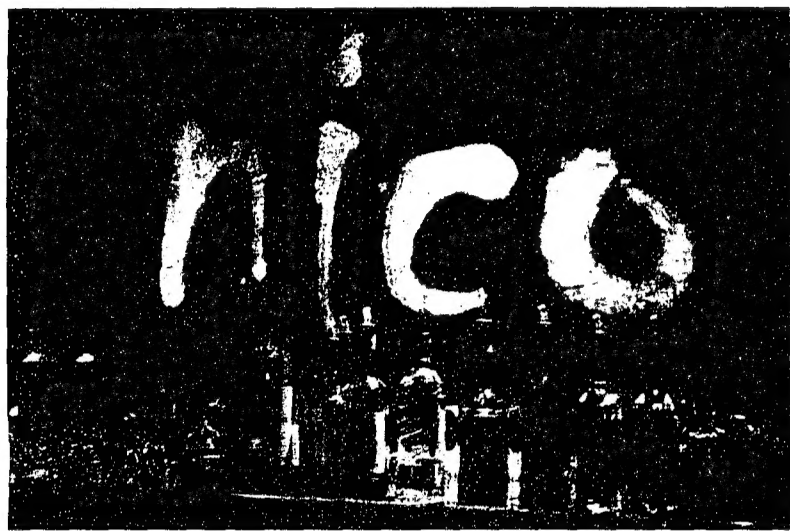
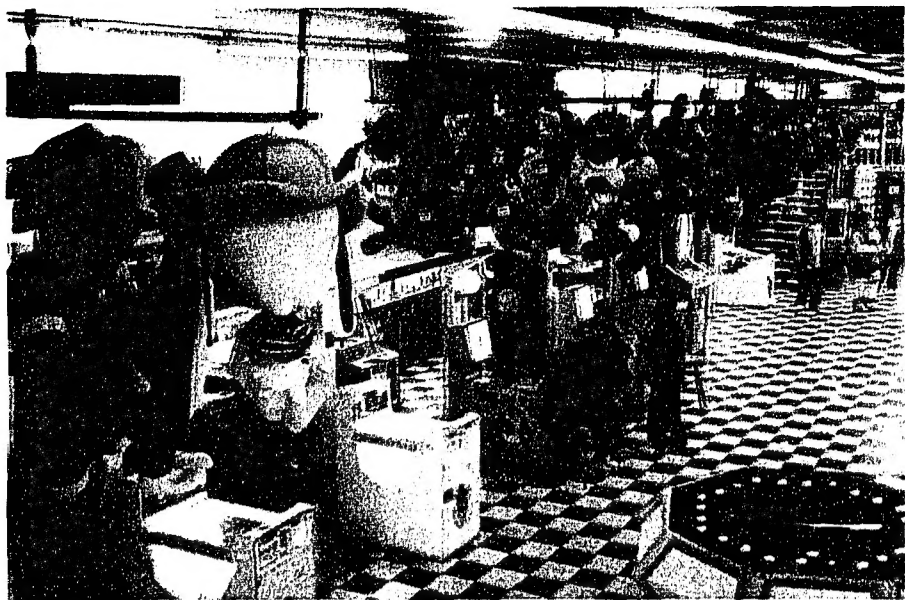
Dustin Tovar helped UNO win the national championship by becoming a finalist at 125

knee was blown out. His two minutes of injury-time ran out, and UNO picked up six points to give them the national title by 2 1/2 points.

"It's a great pay off for the amount of work we put in," Sigman said. "It puts the icing on the cake. We wanted to do it with NDSU here so people couldn't say [in the next years] we only won because they were gone."

The win was a team effort in the truest sense. If one wrestler doesn't perform exactly as he did, NDSU walks away with the trophy. The Mavs came home by pulling one of the biggest upsets in wrestling history with its "Minnesota Miracle."

What to do around the town



Plenty to do in Omaha. Clockwise from bottom left: Club Nico, Family Fun Center, The Brazen Head, AMC 24 Movie Theatre.



photos by Michelle Bishop

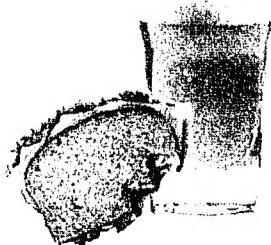
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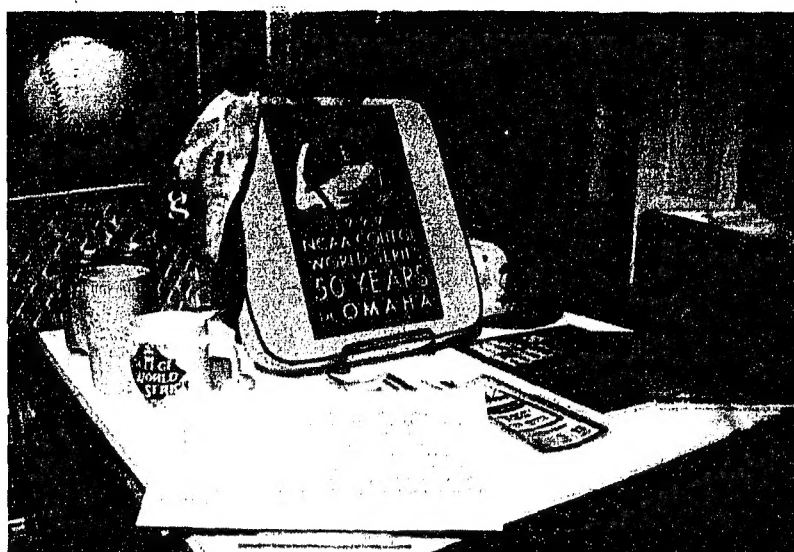
The Road to Omaha

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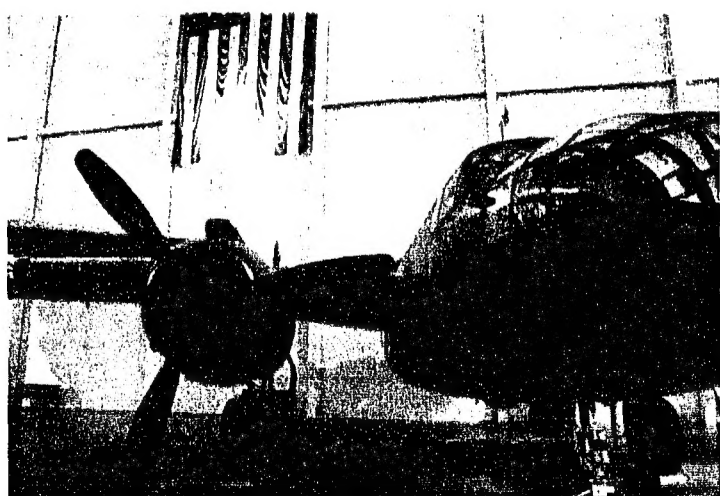
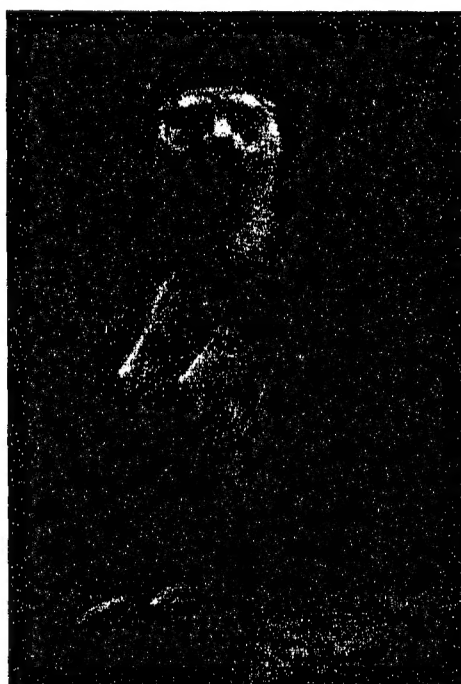


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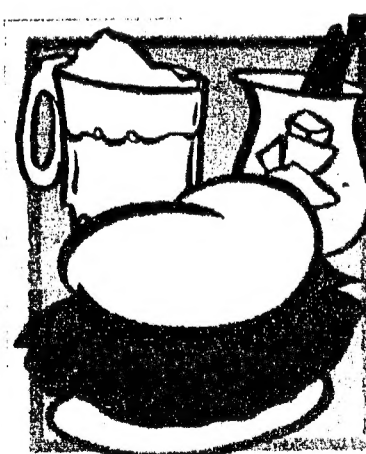
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Check out the many exhibits at the Durham Western Heritage Museum. See the new desert Dome at the Omaha Henry Doorley Zoo, or travel just west of Omaha for the SAC Museum exhibits on military aircrafts.



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Region Champion
Augustana College

NORTH

Outstanding wrestler: Graumann, Aug
Coach of the Year: Augustana

Augie drops UNO second straight week

J. PARKER ADAIR
Editor-in-chief

MARSHALL, Minn.-

At the National Dual Tournament, UNO beat Augustana 20-18. In last weekend's dual rematch, the Vikings beat the Mavericks 20-19. Sunday, Augustana had the NCAA wrestling North Regional all-but-won, lost it and won it again setting the stage for the NCAA tournament.

Scoring errors throughout the tournament led to confusion during the final two bouts of Sunday night's finals. Augustana was announced with a 97-94 lead during the 197-pound final. Minnesota State-Mankato's Josh Janousek beat Viking Tim Boldt

So, when UNO's Les Sigman won his match by 6-2 decision, the Mavs should have tied the team race at 97. When the scorer's table corrected the score, Augustana was given the win 109-99.

Augustana qualified its entire 10-man roster for nationals Sunday while the Mavericks qualified nine.

"I was proud of our guys overall," said UNO Head Coach Mike



Augustana's Ryan King turns UNO's Shane Unger upside down in his 149-pound title match win.

Denney. "I think we wrestled pretty well. We drew a bye with Les, which hurt us. It came down to pins and getting one other guy in."

Each team had seven

wrestlers in the finals, and the championship round resembled the previous two dual meets of the season. There were four head-to-head matchups in the finals, and each of the other six finals had either a Maverick or Viking in the match.

UNO crowned five champions, including wins in four of five consecutive finals. Dan Hilario started the trend at 133 pounds. The junior was named the starter less than two weeks ago when two-time All-American Mitch Waite suffered a season-ending neck injury. Hilario won his second national qualifying meet in his last two tries. In 2003, he won the North Central Conference 125-pound bracket.

"It felt real good to get back out there on the mat," Hilario said. "I let (my teammates) know they needed to push me hard in practice everyday

(to get me ready). They did a good job of that."

Eli Dominguez won at 141. Patrick Allibone won 8-1 in a head-to-head match with Augustana's Austin Scarest.

J.D. Naig won by medical forfeit at 165 when Cody Henriksen refused to wrestle Naig, a tactic Henriksen has used against Naig recently.

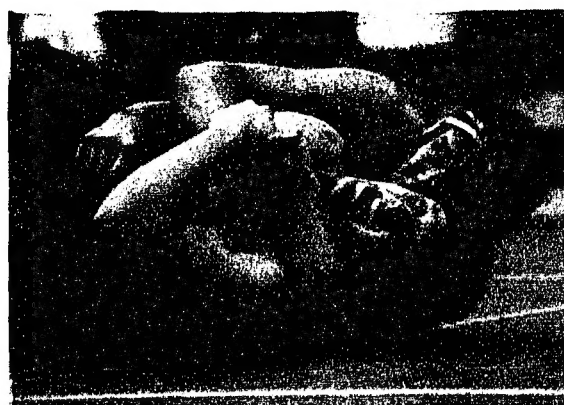
Dustin Tovar (125) and Shane Unger (149) each finished second to Augustana wrestlers. Steve Conlin (174) took third. Ben Strandberg finished fourth at 197.

UNO was 5-3 against Augustana in head-to-head matches during the tournament.

"They've got to line up and do it again. We've got to line up and do it again," Denney said.

UNO has six All-Americans leading the way.

"We've just got to keep wrestling like we're wrestling," Denney said. "If we keep wrestling like we're wrestling then we are going to be just fine."



J. Parker Adair/Kearney

Junior Les Sigman won his third region crown at heavyweight. The two-time defending national champion led UNO to its second straight second place region finish.

All roads ...

Lopers beat Grizzlies to win the West

MICHAEL CARNES
Nebraska Wrestling
Illustrated

CHADRON, Neb. --

Going into the finals, Adams State was nipping at the heels of fourth-ranked Nebraska-Kearney and had an opportunity to overtake the two-time defending West Region champions.

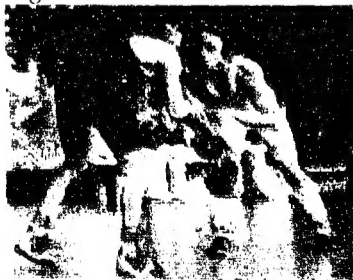
The Lopers came through big in the finals, though, beating Adams State head-to-head three times in the finals, including two key early finals matchups to pull away and claim the West Region and Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference for the third time in as many years at Chadron State

College's Nelson Activities Center. UNK won head-to-head matchups with the Grizzlies at 125, 133 and 165 pounds and won five of six finals matchups to

turn a close tournament into a

23-point cushion.

Bryce Abbey got the Lopers rolling with a 3-1 decision over the Grizzlies' Rob McCabe, and Adam Keiswetter got a late takedown and two-point nearfall off his infamous twister move to upend Raymond Dunning 6-3. Aaron Dalton made



Lockett in last year's 133-pound final.

it a perfect 3-for-3 for the Lopers against the Grizzlies in the finals, edging Evan Copeland 6-5 in the 165-pound final.

UNK coach Marc Bauer was happy his team was able to come through in the finals against the Grizzlies.

"They (Adams State) are really solid on top and can ride the heck out of kids, and we beat them in some pretty good matches," he said. "Bryce had some trouble getting (McCabe) down early on, but he was able to get it done and rode him out. Keiswetter was down two and I don't know how he beat him. He hit him with the twister for four to win it. Dalton beat their kid with an inside trip for four, but that kid came back and actually launched Dalton, but it was out of bounds."

San Francisco State's Donald Lockett was named the tournament's outstanding wrestler after dominating the 141-pound bracket. He won his regional title without having to wrestle, as Adams State's Kortney Lake was forced to take an injury default in the finals.

UNK's Trevel Dlagnev was named Freshman of the Year in the region after winning the heavyweight division in dominating

fashion, beating Colorado School of Mines' Derek Thompson with a 14-6 major decision. Both Dlagnev and defending 197-pound national champion Jeff Sylvester were regional champions as Nebraska-Kearney qualified nine of its 10 wrestlers, including newcomer Dan Hospodka, who placed third at 184. Also qualifying for UNK were brothers Matt (141) and Pat True (149) and Zac Rice (174).

While the Grizzlies did come up short in the team race and failed to win one of their six finals matches, they were able to qualify all 10 wrestlers for the national tournament.

Fort Hays and San Francisco State each had two regional champions. The Tigers won with David Nordhues (157) and Mike Howell (184) while Pacifico Garcia (149) joined Lockett at the top of the medal stand. Western State's

Matt Trout won at 174 pounds to round out the West regional champions.

SOUTHWEST
MUSTANGS

Eagles



Nebraska-Kearney

Bryce Abbey won the 125-pound bracket in the West Regional. The Lopers won the Region for the third straight year. Marc Bauer was named the region coach of the year.

Region Champion
Nebraska-Kearney

WEST

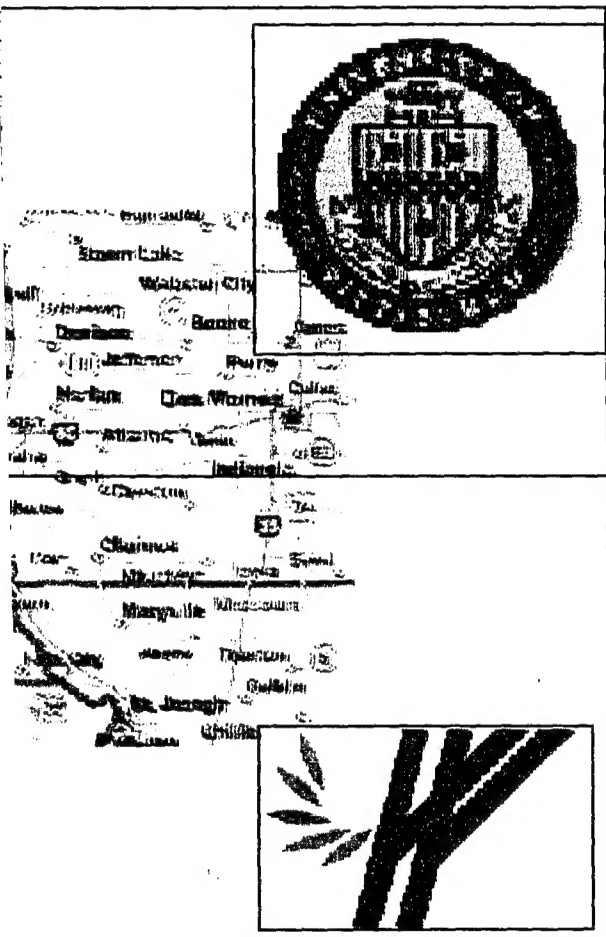
Outstanding wrestler: Donald Lockett-SCFSU
Coach of the Year: Mark Bauer-UNK

Region Champion Pitt-Johnstown

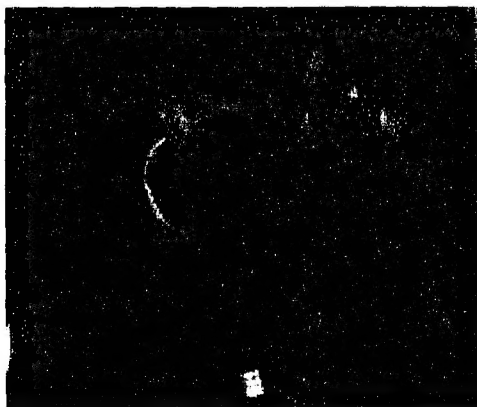


arneyPitt-Johnstown

The University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown won its 18th regional, and they did it in front of the home crowd. UPJ has been climbing upward in the rankings recently and will likely make an impact on the championship race.



id to Omaha



Ashland University

James Phillips helped his team pick up the trifecta by winning Outstanding Wrestler. Ashland also won coach of the year and the Midwest Region tournament.

Region Champion Ashland (Ohio)

EAST

Outstanding wrestler: Curry Pickard-UNCP
Coach of the Year: Pat Pecora-UPJ

Pitt-Johnstown storms back to win

PITT-JOHNSTOWN

Sports Information

PITTSBURGH --

Trailing by 8.5 points entering Saturday's action at the 2005 NCAA Division II East Regional Wrestling Tournament, Head Coach Pat Pecora, the 2005 East Region Coach of the Year, and the Pitt Johnstown Mountain Cats rallied with five individual champions and eight National Qualifiers to win the school's 18th Regional Championship in front their home crowd. The Mountain Cats accumulated 143 teams points to win the title over second place Mercyhurst College, who will also have eight wrestlers at the National Championships.

Ryon Mazzocco (125 lbs.), Thad Benton (141 lbs.), Matt Roncolato (157 lbs.), Howard Bell (197 lbs.) and Zach Majocha (285 lbs.) all claimed individual titles for Pitt Johnstown, while Ryan Ickes (149 lbs.) and Mike Corcetti (184 lbs.) both placed third

and Eli Garshnick (174 lbs.) placed fourth to advance to the University of Nebraska-Omaha for the 2005 National Championships on March 11-12.

Mercyhurst College, who led the team standings after the first day of competition, placed second with 132 team points. Five Mercyhurst wrestlers earned runner-up finishes, including J.J. Zanetta (133 lbs.), Don Cummings (141 lbs.), Zach Schafer (165 lbs.), Ben McAviney (184 lbs.) and Angelo Caponi (285 lbs.). Ricky Randazzo (125 lbs.) and Justin Mautz (197 lbs.) both placed third and Hudson Harrison (157 lbs.) placed fourth to qualify for nationals.

Shippensburg University placed third (94.5 team points) with six National Qualifiers, followed by the University of North



Pitt-Johnstown Coach Pat Pecora picked up the Coach of the Year award as his team won its 18th consecutive East Region title.

Carolina-Pembroke with five National Qualifiers, including the tournament's Outstanding Wrestler Curry Pickard (133 lbs.). Rounding out the top

five was West Liberty State College with 83 team points. Four Hilltoppers earned to trip to this year's National Tournament.

R. J. Patternitti's championship at 149 lbs. led four qualifiers and a sixth-place finish for Gannon University. Kutztown University placed seventh with a pair of National Qualifiers, followed by Anderson College's pair of National Qualifiers, including Careef Robertson, who won an individual title at 174 lbs. Limestone College placed ninth with one qualifier, while American International College finished the tournament in 10th place.

Ashland takes title from slumping UCO

PAUL CARMANY

Ashland Sports
Information

KENOSHA, Wisc. --

Everything came full circle for AU seniors Tommy Bauer, Aldo Campea and James Phillips on Feb. 27 at the NCAA Division II Midwest Regional wrestling meet.

As freshmen in 2002, the trio had helped Ashland knock off perennial champion Pitt-Johnstown to win the NCAA Division II East Regional title. In the final regional meet of their respective careers, Bauer, Campea and Phillips played starring roles as the Eagles ended Central Oklahoma's 15-year run as regional champion at Wisconsin-Parkside.

Bauer and Phillips each won regional titles and Campea finished second, helping AU tally 118.5 points. Findlay finished second with 106 while Central Oklahoma was relegated to third with 95 points.

The Eagles also took home some individual

hardware. Phillips was named the regional wrestler of the year and Ray Kowatch earned the regional coach of the year award.

Phillips set the tone for the meet by going 3-0 and winning the 125-pound class. A 5-4 double overtime win over Carson-Newman's Chonci Houston in the final improved his season record

110 collegiate wins. He is very coachable."

Wrestling for the first time in two and a half weeks, Bauer went 3-0 to win the title at 174. His 10-3 decision over SIU-Edwardsville's Eric Scholle in the championship match was the 100th of Bauer's career. The 12th AU wrestler to reach the 100-win mark, Bauer will now seek his fourth All-America honor.

Campea went 2-1 to finish as the runner-up at 285. Now 29-5 on the season, Campea will shoot for his third All-America honor.

Eric Lakia was one of five other Eagles to advance to the national meet, winning the title at 165. In

his first appearance at the regional meet, Lakia went 3-0, including a 9-1 major decision over Findlay's Adam Morris in the championship. His performance was a "very pleasant surprise," according to Kowatch.

Senior Dugan Bentley was one of three Eagles to finish third, doing so at 149.

He went 3-1 and is now tied with Phillips and Esmont for fourth on the career wins list with 110 victories.

After losing his first match of the day, Clint Carmony won his next three matches at 184, including one over Findlay's Kristopher Klepacz, the top-ranked wrestler in the region. At 25-7, he will make his first trip to the national meet.

Ryan Kirst finished third at 197 to advance to the national tournament for the third straight year. He is 31-4 this season.

The Eagles' final wrestler who will be making the trip to Nebraska-Omaha on March 11-12 will be Pete Carnabuci, who finished fourth at 157. "He wasn't even our regular starter at the beginning of the season, but he really performed," observed Kowatch.

Zach Meissner finished fifth at 133 and Tony Iovine was sixth at 141, rounding out the Eagle finishers on Sunday.

Of the Eagles' performance, Kowatch said, "We'll enjoy it today but tomorrow we start again."



Central Oklahoma

Cort Peterson and UCO had an uncharacteristic showing in Kenosha

to 32-1 and was number 110 of his career. That ties him with Jeff Esmont (1978-82) for fourth on the AU career wins list. Phillips' second regional title punched the ticket for his fourth trip to the national meet.

Of his regional wrestler of the year award, Kowatch noted, "James is well-deserving, as he now has

MIDWEST

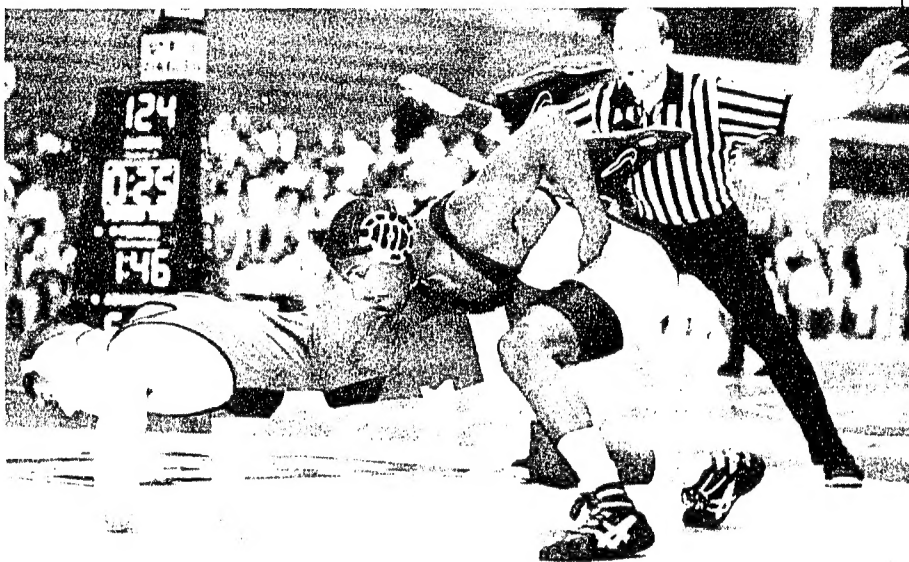
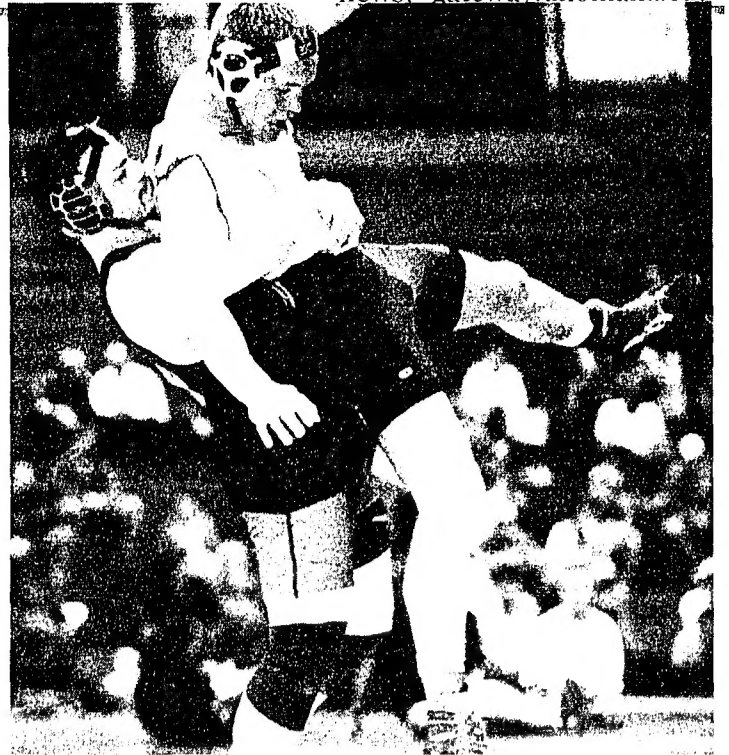
Outstanding wrestler: James Phillips-ASH
Coach of the Year: Ray Kowatch-ASH

J. Parker Adair
News Editor

UNO

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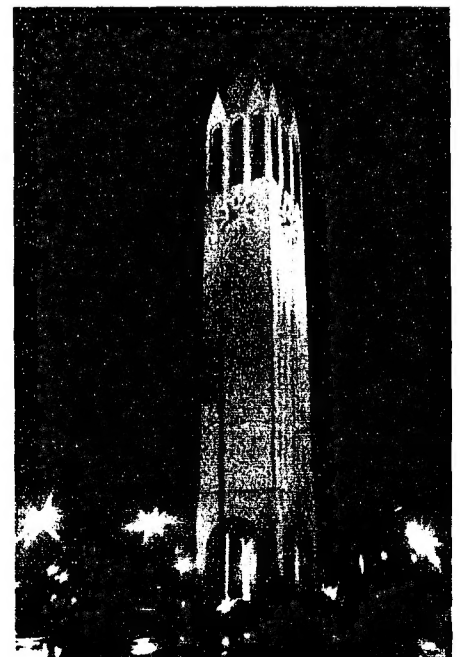
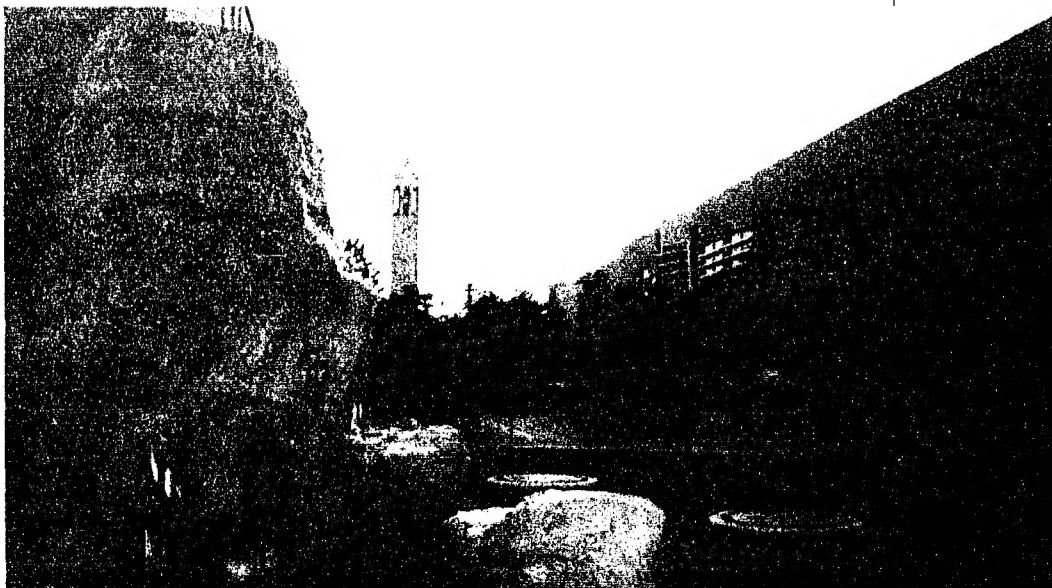
1999 NCAA Championships



In March of 1999, the University of Nebraska-Omaha hosted the NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships. Fans flocked the Lee and Helene Sapp Fieldhouse for the tournament. The final round featured the mat on a raised platform. Competitors wrestled center-stage under the lights. There have since been renovations to fieldhouse, including chairs with seat backs in the bleachers. UNO annually plays host to the Kaufman/Brand Open, the nation's largest single-day wrestling tournament.

The UNO campus

The UNO campus has many beautiful sites. At top right is the Al F. Caniglia football field. On the east end of campus, it is the home of the defending North Central Conference champions. Field Turf was installed for the 2000-01 season. The clocktower is a staple of the UNO campus. It can be seen throughout midtown Omaha and is a landmark guide for navigating campus. The Milo Bail Student Center Plaza sits at the center of the University. There are tables for students to relax between classes and is often times the host to bands and other events.



J. Parker Adair
News Editor

ATHLETES

Contact:
news@gateway.unomaha.edu

Expect tough brackets early from this field

J. PARKER ADAIR
The Gateway

This year's field is impressive. There are few weight classes that have a clear favorite, and all of them have several competitors worthy of the championship. A look at the line up keeps an eye on whom to watch.

125 pounds

This is one of the most hotly contested classes in the tournament. Nebraska-Omaha's Dustin Tovar is the defending national runner-up. He is currently ranked third behind Aaron Grauman of Augustana and James Phillips from Ashland. Grauman beat Tovar in the finals of the North Region to be named

Outstanding Wrestler. Phillips was named Outstanding Wrestler of the Midwest Region. Nebraska-Kearney's Bryce Abbey is looking to be a four-time All-American, and those four could easily be the semifinalists.

133 pounds

Curry Pickard from UNC-Pembroke looks to be the favorite in this bracket. If both win, he will have to face Jared Henning of Central Oklahoma. Henning takes the place of four-time National Champion Cole Province. Shane Perkey from Indianapolis may meet him in the semifinals if he can by UNO's Dan Hilario is a former American and took North Region title more than two weeks after replacing two-time All-American Mitch Waite. Findlay's Andy Uhl and UNK's Keiswetter are in the other half of the bracket

141 pounds

Take your pick. Merrick Meyer from Truman State has been number one all season long as defending national champion. San Francisco State's Donald Lockett was a finalist at 133 last year. Adams State's Kortney Lake moves up also. Eli

Dominguez of UNO took third in the weight class, and there is only one title to go around. This is the best weight class out there. Meyer and Lockett are in the quarterfinals. Dominguez is in the semifinals. Andrey

157 pounds
This is a toss up. Nobody seems to have a lock or be a remote favorite. Allibone has the experience, but Fort Hays State's David Nordhues is at the top right now. And he is returning to his home state.

is tough too. It was King, Unger and Rhoten in the top three of the region. It could be in

Omaha, but look out for SFSU's Pacifico Garcia.

157 pounds

165 pounds
J.D. Naig has been at the top all season long. One of four wrestlers to do after Shawn Silvis and on Lowe graduated with combine five NCAA titles, Naig took over. UCO's Cort Peterson will see him in the first round after a bad showing in Kenosha. This will be the best match of the round. Dwane Coward of UNCP is second, and Augie's

Cody Henriksen hasn't wrestled Naig all season.

174 pounds

This is a tough one to pick, Carief Robertson from Anderson, Ashland's Tom Bauer and Ryan Daniels of UCO should be at least top four. Narrowing it from there is tricky as they have fluctuated all season.

184 pounds

Tom Meester from

Augustana could go wire-to-wire after winning last year's title. He looks trimmed and solid, even better than last year.

197 pounds

This will be exciting once the

second round

hits. Top-ranked Tim Boldt of Augustana should meet UNK's defending National Champion Jeff Sylvester. This could decide the championship, but Mankato's Josh Janousek beat

Boldt in their regional final, and should make it to the finals Saturday.

285 pounds

Heavyweight should be the easiest pick of the litter. UNO's Les Sigman can pick up his third title in three years. Unless Steve Mocco transfers from Oklahoma State this weekend, Sigman takes the title right back to his room. His biggest challenge will be North Dakota State transfer/Mocco look-alike Chris Tuchscherer of Minnesota-Moorhead.

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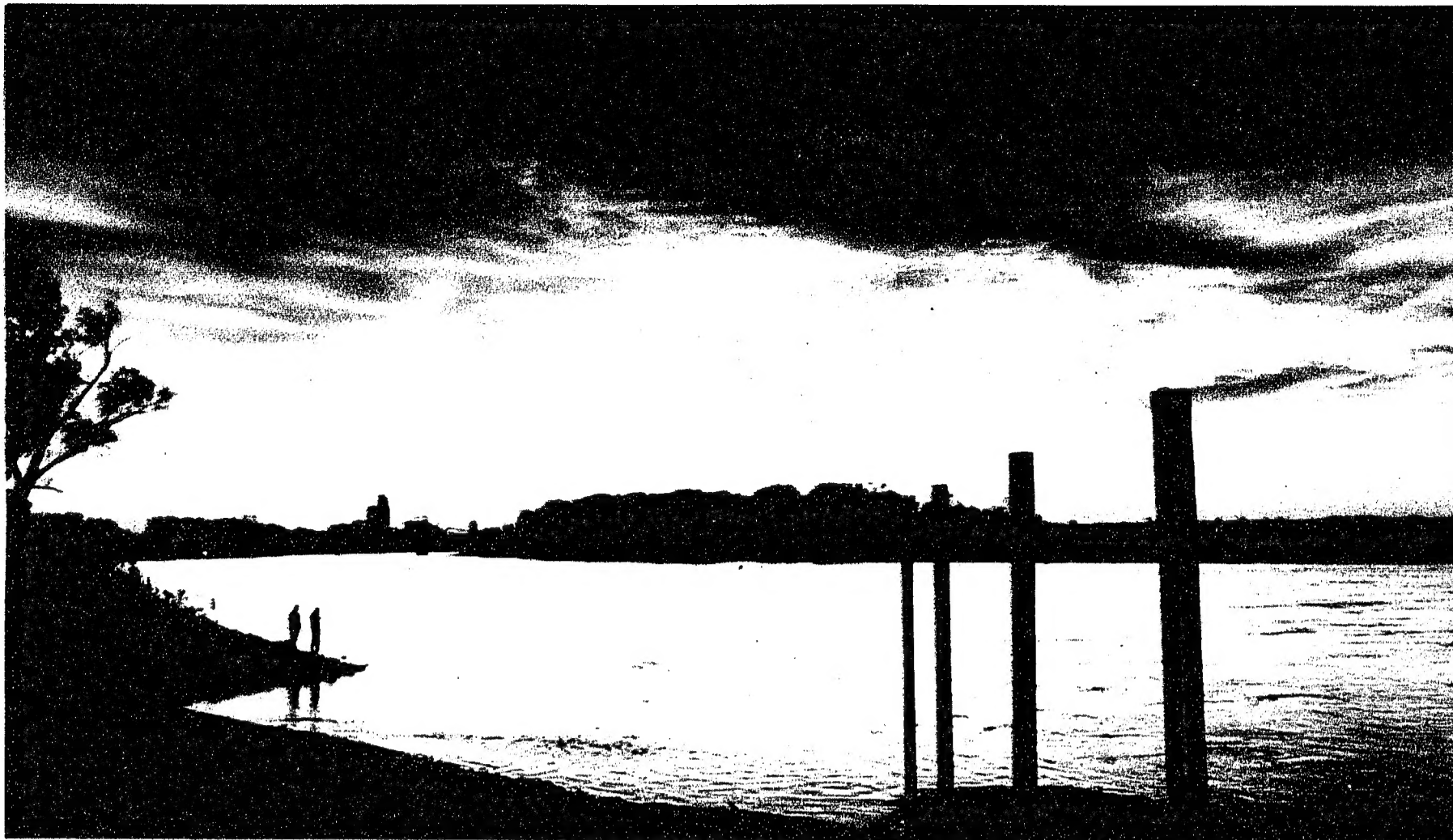


photo by Michelle Bishop

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